United Nations E/CN.5/2007/NGO/13

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
13 December 2006

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Forty-fifth session
7-16 February 2007
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Christian Children's Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.5/2007/1.

06-65779 (E) 050107

Statement

1. In order to guarantee full employment and decent work – productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate income, with adequate social protection – for all, youth must have access to viable employment opportunities.

2. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the world is facing a growing youth employment crisis. Young people, between the ages of 15 and 24, represent approximately 41% of the world's unemployed. Youth unemployment rates are higher than those of adults, and are often two to three times than those of adults. The ILO has found that "a global deficit of decent work opportunities has resulted in a situation in which one out of every three youth in the world is either seeking but unable to find work, has given up the job search entirely or is working but still living below the US$2 a day poverty line."[1]

3. Young people also often find themselves "at the back of the line" for jobs and are often unable to find jobs in the formal economy. A lack of social safety nets, however, means that youth must engage in some form of work to survive. While the informal economy may provide youth with a source of income, "there has also been disturbing evidence of a rise in the number of unemployed urban youth who are turning to street crime, gangs, prostitution and armed conflict."[2]

4. There is also a growing concern that "the informal work will become the only option for large numbers of young people, thereby making the objective of decent employment for all increasingly unattainable. The distinction between employment and unemployment is gradually losing much of its meaning as young people move into and out of the informal sector, where neither term has any real relevance."[3]

5. Today, there are 191 million migrants worldwide, and young people account for around 30% of this total. Youth are forced to migrate – from rural to urban areas, or to other countries – in search of work. The journeys that young people take, leaving their homes in search of better lives, can lead to danger and exploitation, as well as education and opportunity. It is important to note that youth migrants submit significant sums of money to their home countries through remittances.

6. Young people surveyed in an online consultation on migration done by the Global Youth Action Network suggested and applauded programs and national policy that allow young migrants to enter countries temporarily, and later bring money and skills back to their home countries.

"Those who are fortunate to have been empowered economically by their migration can now have the opportunity to empower others and hence reduce the risk of every young person leaving or wanting to leave their country." Stephen Asek, 25, Cameroon[4]

"Free and better education must be provided for youths and employment facilities for youths both abroad and home country. Most, if not all, youths migrate because of better education or well paying, lucrative jobs." Andrew Kondoh, 25, Sierra Leone[5]

7. Given these concerns, to date, there has been little consistent focus on this age group, even though youth are vulnerable to unemployment and idleness and often lack access to secondary school.

8. While many poor countries have made progress in providing basic education to children, many school systems are now faced, and ill-equipped, with the learning needs of youth. A big challenge for many countries remains providing youth with access to secondary education, especially lower secondary school. Research has found that "low levels of youth unemployment can coexist with a weak youth labor market as a result of extended participation in education by a high proportion of the young population. Education and training policies are thus inextricably linked to patterns of unemployment."[6]

---

[1] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, 2006; Foreword.
[2] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 62, 67-68.
[3] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 67-68.
[4] Global Youth Action Network 2006, online survey response, *http://groups.takingitglobal.org/Youthmigration*.
[5] Global Youth Action Network 2006, online survey response, *http://groups.takingitglobal.org/Youthmigration*.
[6] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 62.

The World Youth Report states that, "for young people, jobs provide a source not only of income, but also of dignity and self-respect. Youth who enter the workforce with limited job prospects, underdeveloped skills and inadequate education face the highest risk of long-term unemployment, underemployment and low-wage employment throughout their working lives, making them more vulnerable to social exclusion. Furthermore, unemployment and inadequate employment among youth contribute to high levels of poverty." [7]

9. "Without the right foothold from which to start out right in the labor market, young people are less able to make choices that will improve their own job prospects and those of their future dependents. This, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of insufficient education, low-productivity employment and working poverty from one generation to the next." [8]

Recommendations

10. In order to address the needs of older children and youth, targeted attention and programs are necessary. These efforts could include:

- **National and community-based programs for youth on livelihoods and employment, including non-formal and vocational education and the promotion of small businesses. This could be done in partnership with local authorities and NGOs due to their direct interaction with communities at grassroots level. Targeted vocational training allows youth to access skilled employment. However, in order for vocational training programs to be successful, they must be coupled with comprehensive market surveys to ensure that there is a demand for the skill and that there are job opportunities in that field. Vocational training programs should also be linked to micro-finance programs, allowing trained youth to start businesses, if they choose to do so. Another important option to ensuring the success of vocational training programs is linking such programs to job placement or apprenticeship programs.**
- **Forming local youth venues for participation in decision-making, such as local youth councils, with real power and adequate funding for their activities. This shall guarantee youth participation in decision-making at the local level.**
- **Involving young people in the development and evaluation of youth-targeted education, skills, or employment programs.**
- **Engaging Youth in Poverty Reduction Strategy Processes and Country Assistance Strategies, including programs targeting rural and urban areas.**
- **Promoting income generating activities for youth, through micro-finance and small enterprise training, as well as promoting youth cooperatives that foster and support creative and innovative ideas.**
    - **Seeking partnerships aimed at increasing employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods. Youth must participate in the development of national action plans on youth employment, including promotion of entrepreneurship amongst youth through provision of better information, training, and access to resources and professional mentoring programs.**
    - **Motivating youth volunteerism at the national and international levels, and focusing on assisting marginalized and vulnerable youth to organize them to address their own needs and interests.**
    - **Allowing youth to participate in the programming and implementing of a youth employment network to prevent youth marginalization and poverty.**
    - **Emphasizing partnerships between governments and youth, including youth participation as delegates and representatives at international conferences and forums by LDCs, developing countries, and developed countries.**

[7] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 67-68.
[8] ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth*, 2006; Foreword.

- **Resolving to strengthen youth employment initiatives, such as the Youth Employment Network.**

- **Increasing the employment intensity of economic growth, "especially in the rapidly expanding sectors of the economy. Governments can establish incentive structures that promote employment-intensive growth by directing investment to sectors that are more employment intensive."[9]**

- **Providing young people with opportunities to "learn through work" – which would allow youth to gain practical and transferable skills and allow employers to get to know the youth they may employ in the future.**

- **Governments should adopt policies and initiatives to promote economic growth *and* job creation.**

Note:

Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Brothers of Charity, Dominican Leadership Conference, Elizabeth Seton Federation, Global Youth Action Network, International Council of Jewish Women, International Union for Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Lutheran World Federation and Peace Worldwide.

---

[9] United Nations, *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*, Youth Employment; 2004; 62.